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# Facing up to reality on terrorism.

AMONG the traumas of our time, the political use of terror ranks high. And, among the quirkier neuroses of our time, the anti-intelligence syndrome in America ranks equally high.

The two make no sense together.

Americans like to be nice, open guys and suspect anything covert. But alas, in the real world, terrorists operate in secret and must be met by secret information gathering and secret action.

An Indian prime minister is killed. Her son, the new prime minister, is being stalked for the kill.

The British prime minister barely escapes a bombing death. The Pope is shot in a secret plot, but survives.

A Marine troop dormitory and the American embassy in Beirut are terror-bombed with hundreds of deaths, forcing Americans to decamp in pain and humiliation.

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By MAX LERNER

This is the context for the newest attack on the American effort to counter the terror coming out of Lebanon.

A Washington Post story, probably leaked, tells of a March 8 bombing by a secret Lebanese unit that killed about 80 people but missed its prime target — Mohammed Fadlallah — the man known to have planned, blessed and directed the terror against the American Marines.

American intelligence, everyone agrees, has broken its connection with the Lebanese unit. The CIA denies any advance knowledge of the attack.

But that doesn't mute the wailing from administration foes in Congress and the press, nor does it keep America's enemies in every hostile intelligence agency and propaganda bureau from

exulting because the CIA has again become a dirty word.

Let's face it. The dirtying of the CIA and the American intelligence community may well be the most lethal weapon that America's enemies possess.

Is it a self-dirtying that is happening to the CIA? I read editorials saying that Americans must not "fight fire with fire," lest they end by abandoning their values and embracing those of their enemies.

But anyone watching a forest fire knows that "fighting fire with fire" is exactly what gutsy firefighters — their faces sooty, their lungs smoke-scorched — must do.

Terror is a force field that can't be handled with a cosmic dance of virtue in the sunlight of the media. If the Israelis had followed this

principle, there would be no Israel.

Or do we follow the model set in our handling of the Tehran hostages?

Nothing is more real in the real world than the dark operations of secret terror. You fight it as you can, by preemptive and preventive operations, and by warnings of retribution meant as a deterrence.

Americans are not terribly good at these secret ways. Two fellows named Shultz and McFarlane are new at counter-terrorism but they are trying.

Bill Casey and the CIA may have laid an egg on this one. There is grime, squalor and risk in intelligence operations. But we can't have the palm without the dust.

If we leave this force field to be monopolized by our enemies, we may find we have no civilization left in which to cherish our values.